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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 002025

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#) [KBEM](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF INTERIOR ON ELECTIONS, SECURITY

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[11.](#) (C) Summary: Minister of Interior, and PPRD co-founder, Theophile Mbemba expressed concern that the newly launched pre-election campaigns will further divide the transitional components and throw up new obstacles to military integration. He outlined a PPRD strategy to dominate all the southern provinces except western Kasai, as well as South Kivu and Katanga in the East, thereby ensuring Joseph Kabila's victory. The majority of seats in Parliament likely will go to the MLC, according to the Minister, making Bemba Prime Minister. Mbemba insisted that Kabila has decided to be the PPRD candidate but will postpone announcing this until early December. The PPRD is exploring alliances with the MLC and Etienne Tshisekedi's UDPS with an eye to improving the PPRD position in Province Orientale and western Kasai, respectively. When pressed, he admitted that Katanga could be not only an electoral battleground but the stumbling block for the transition as a whole. With face-offs between police and military on the rise and social tension increasing, Mbemba said, the country could "implode" before elections in any event. End Summary.

The PPRD Elections Map -- Color It PPRD

[12.](#) (C) Over dinner October 29 at PolCoun's house, Minister of Interior and PPRD co-founder Theophile Mbemba waxed enthusiastic over his party's likely success in next year's elections. Simply put, party strategists believe the PPRD will control Kinshasa (itself a province), Bas-Congo, Bandundu and East Kasai, as well as South Kivu and Katanga. West Kasai is solidly with Etienne Tshisekedi's UDPS so unless PPRD can forge an alliance they will not do well there -- and do not intend to waste time, money or effort in trying to do so. The Eastern Province probably will go to Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC, according to Mbemba, but surprisingly, Bemba could lose his home province of Equateur to either the UDPS (which, according to Mbemba, is well organized and working hard there) or to the PPRD. The RCD is too weak to control anything, and therefore the entire East is up for grabs -- which, he said, explains why everyone has launched their campaigns in Bukavu (or, in the President's case, Kisangani). A clearly disgruntled Mbemba acknowledged that President Kabila will now be the last politician to visit South Kivu, since Bemba, VP Z'Ahidi Ngoma and now VP Yarodia have all made initial visits. Nonetheless, Mbemba was confident that Kabila will capture South Kivu, in part because of his mother's origins. (Note: Presidential friends and loyalists say that Kabila's mother is a South Kivutian -- his enemies say that she is a Rwandan. In any event, she likely is from South Kivu, at least geographically. End Note.) North Kivu will be an enigma until the day after elections, Mbemba predicted, but acknowledged that Bemba clearly is courting Governor Serufili, who is unquestionably well-positioned to "deliver" his province to the candidate of his choice. (Septel reports further details of Bemba's visit to the two Kivus.) Even without North Kivu, however, Mbemba said Kabila will garner the majority of the popular vote, guaranteeing his election as president.

Useful But Not Necessary Alliances

[13.](#) (C) Mbemba said that the PPRD is exploring a possible alliance with the MLC, primarily with the aim of improving its effective presence in Parliament, i.e., the MLC likely will win a majority of Parliamentary seats, putting it in a position to block key government legislation. Bemba likely would "settle" for being Prime Minister, a position which would ensure his continued access to wealth, and he and Kabila normally have a good working relationship, Mbemba said, making this a natural partnership. (Note: Mbemba said that both PPRD and MLC have already decided to support a President-Prime Minister-Parliament scheme for the future government, implying there is therefore little left to do but produce the appropriate paragraphs in the constitution enshrining this arrangement. End Note.) PPRD also is talking to Tshisekedi's UDPS but so far the negotiations haven't advanced much beyond the early stages, in large part because PPRD has more to offer UDPS than vice versa -- although PPRD would, Mbemba admitted, like to add West Kasai to its group of "captive" provinces. (Comment: It could be hard for the elder statesman Tshisekedi to swallow being second fiddle to a young upstart like Kabila. End Comment.) Mbemba insisted that UDPS will not renew its old ties to the

RCD (despite recent confident assertions PolCouns heard from RCD leaders), since the RCD "has nothing to offer anyone." When PolCouns asked about courting Z'Ahidi Ngoma or Yarodia (for the support of the unarmed political opposition and civil society, respectively) Mbemba somewhat contemptuously dismissed both, noting that neither faction is united nor does either benefit from strong leadership -- meaning that all the diverse elements are up for grabs. (Comment: Given the historical animosity between Yarodia and Kabila it would be hard in any event to image Yarodia throwing his support behind Kabila, even were he in a position to do so. End Comment.) He added, almost in passing, that President Kabila is currently "on the outs" with Z'Ahidi over the latter's visit to Bukavu the same weekend as the President's trip to Kisangani -- a move clearly designed to upstage the President in one of his "home provinces." After a quick pause, Mbemba said that of the major religious groups (a key element of civil society) the Kimbanguists definitely will support Kabila, and possibly the Catholics as well, but that the evangelists probably will go for Tshisekedi while the protestants will throw their support to Bemba.

Katanga The Battleground, Maybe In More Ways Than One

14. (C) When pressed, Mbemba reluctantly acknowledged that PPRD might have trouble in Katanga -- in more ways than one. From both an electoral and security standpoint, he said, the province is increasingly problematic and indeed, could be the trigger which explodes the transition. Pointing to outside influence, Mbemba said that Congolese security forces have, in the last several weeks, "escorted" over thirty Zambians to the border and warned them not to return. These were people, he said, who have been posing as businessmen but who actually have been fomenting unrest and political divisiveness; likewise Tanzania is increasingly active in the province, particularly in the northern zones, and its influence is becoming worrisome, while South Africa is a "giant" in the provincial landscape. All this plus, he noted, a resurgence of traditional tribal-based tensions between north-south Katanga and between southern Katanga and West Kasai, represents a heady and potentially explosive brew. Finally, he noted cautiously, there are some Presidential advisors, Katangans, who don't necessarily want elections and who have been working against the President's interests in the province. (Comment: Mbemba wouldn't name names, but most likely he was referring to both Air Force General Numbi and Augustin Katumba, whose name increasingly is being linked to a variety of troubling developments. PolCouns also has heard from various people that Katumba is trying to marginalize Mbemba or drive him from office, because he, Katumba, would like Mbemba's job, so there also could be an element of personal bias involved in Mbemba's hints. End Comment.)

Finger On The Trigger - Social Unrest Rising

15. (C) During dinner Mbemba took several calls (including one from Kabila) about a security incident in the Kinshasa neighborhood of Binza, where unpaid soldiers had tried to rob moneychangers, only to be attacked by enraged citizens, assisted by police. Using this incident as an example, Mbemba said that he is increasingly concerned that face-offs between military and police, or between citizens and army/police, represent a disturbing societal shift. People are angry and restless, he said, and more and more they are inclined to fight back, sometimes striking out without thinking. This "social trigger," he said, could implode the country before the transition can get to elections. Along these lines, he added that he regrets the early launch of pre-campaigning, which he feels will further divide the transition and virtually eliminate the possibility of military integration (he predicted that the RCD, especially, will now dig in its heels on integration since its only political card is the threat of renewed fighting in the East). He welcomed the latest EU initiative to provide police training, hoping that it will augment, in some ways, the French-trained riot police. (Comment: When Mbemba left he was on his way to Binza, together with a military official, to try to calm the situation without utilizing the riot police against the military, and indeed, the situation was resolved without recourse to violent means. End Comment.)

Comment

16. (C) We agree that social issues and/or the swirling dynamic of Katanga are two potential flashpoints to future progress, but it is unclear what the government, or Kabila specifically, can do to defuse them. The former is difficult due to lack of means, the latter intransigent because of Kabila's reliance on Katangans as a key support base. Mbemba's vision of PPRD dominance and MLC quiescence seems simplistic and, indeed, cocky, although we could wish it would indeed be this easy. More troubling are his admissions -- confirming our suspicions -- of possible external manipulation in Katanga.

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